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THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: UPSTART ON THE FINANCIAL AID SCENE

Gene S. Miller

One of the unique contributions to higher education in the United States has been the origin and development of the Community College. These two-year undergraduate schools, formerly called junior colleges, have opened the doors of higher education to a vast number of people from ages 18 to 80.

Historically, "junior colleges" had their beginnings about the turn of the century. They emerged from two parallel movements occurring at this time. Attempts were being directed to develop post high school courses for students in several states. The first officially recognized program was originated at Joliet, Illinois, in 1901 (1, pp. 11-12). Simultaneously, several four-year college leaders, including William Rainey Harper at the University of Chicago, were recommending lower division colleges, patterned after the German Gymnasium, so that the University could concentrate on research and upper division programs. In 1900, no recognized public "junior" colleges existed, although there were eight private lower division schools.

In actuality, momentum for the junior college movement arose from the evolution of colleges and universities which developed following the Morrill land grant Act of 1862. As these schools shifted their major emphasis away from technical and applied sciences, a need arose for schools to assume this role (2, p. 9).



Mrs. Miller is Director of Financial Aid at Pasadena City College. She is presently serving as President of the California Community College Student Aid Officers Association, and has been a member of numerous panels on financial aid administration and student need analysis, among them the H.E.W. Task Force to Study Need Analysis, the College Entrance Examination Board's College Scholarship Division, and the California State Scholarship and Loan Commission's Selection Team for California State Scholarships.

From eight schools in 1900-1901 to nearly 1,100 colleges by 1968, the junior college movement has become a dominant reality in American education. One hundred students were enrolled in 1900; in 1968, that number rose to 1,871,000 or 30 per cent of all undergraduates in higher education (2, pp. 58-59).

The "junior" college movement gained its greatest impetus in California due to a series of legislative acts, beginning in 1907 when high schools were permitted to develop post-secondary courses. Fresno organized the first junior college in California in 1910. A 1917 California law permitted state and county aid to junior colleges and by 1919, 20 colleges were in existence. A law permitting a junior college district to affiliate with a University of California campus or teachers college branch in 1921 spurred further growth. Student enrollment had then reached 3,000. Further encouragement was given by two educational leaders in the state, Dr. Alexis Lange of the University of California and Dr. David Starr Jordan of Stanford University (3, pp. 1-7).

Probably the most important impetus to the growth in numbers and status was the development of a master plan for higher education for California in the 1950's wherein the junior colleges were designated as a legitimate partner in the higher education scene.

Today, of the nearly 1,100 junior colleges in the country, 93 are public, tuition free California community colleges. There are approximately 2,000,000 students enrolled in junior colleges across the country and of this total 800,000 are in California.

The junior college name was originated by Dr. Harper for the role the college played in providing lower division university work (4, p. 37). Objectives today include the whole spectrum of transfer courses, occupational and technical training, and adult education. This community-serving role, coupled by local control and partial local support has led to the evolution of the present term "community college."

Along with the rapid expansion of public community colleges, a myth has been developed that "tuition free" means cost free. Although it is still true that the community college is the "best buy" for lower division education, supplementary academic year costs at a typical college will approximate \$800-\$900 in 1971-72.

However, the geographic availability of the community college, its tuition free base, the broad spectrum of curriculum offerings both vocational and transferrable, coupled with the increased push to enroll minority/low income students and the retraining of adults, has created a unique student body, whose financial situations are widely divergent. Contrary to popular belief, community colleges are not populated only with recent high school graduates who live at home. The Carnegie Commission Report reports that half of the community college students are adults between the ages of 22 and 70 with a median age of 25 (2, p. 6). Many of the students are partially or wholly self-supporting. Secondly, many come from low-income/minority families who view a high school education as the ultimate. Students are expected

to find a job and help support the family after graduation. Those desiring more education must either move out or contribute to room and board at home.

Returning veterans represent another rapidly expanding group of students. This group is frequently selecting the community college because of costs and restricted enrollment at the four-year colleges and due to occasional earlier educational deficiencies which prohibit admission to the four-year college.

Two other frequently overlooked student groups on the community college scene are the married, divorced or widowed woman with children, and the low-skilled and high-skilled adult men presently out of work.

All of these groups will have additional costs including room, utilities, food, clothing, medical expenses, higher personal expenses, and possibly child care expenses. Their allowable student budgets range from \$2,500 to \$5,000 per academic year, and are comparable to those at public four-year institutions.

Community colleges have historically avoided providing financial aid services for these or any student groups. The November 1970 Higher Education Survey, "Professional Development of Financial Aid Officers", develops a profile of community college financial aid officers as follows (5, pp. 17-32):

1. 69% have three years or less experience in the field.
2. 31% have been in their positions less than one year.
3. Only 55% are full-time financial aid officers.
4. 33% are part-time with no professional staff.
5. Fewer than 50% have released time or are reimbursed for professional development.
6. Fewer than 50% receive paid subscriptions to aid publications.
7. Community college financial aid officers generally are low in their degree of professional development.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID SUPPORT IN CALIFORNIA INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, 1971-72

TYPE OF INSTITUTION	No. of Schools	Full Time Undergraduate Enrollment	Avg. Cost Per Student	Avg. Percent Students Aided (No. Students)	Dollars Requested	Per Capita Index (\$)
California Community College	91	343,576	1737	10.24 (35,182)	\$29,243,593	\$ 85.11
State Colleges	19	172,560	2384	21.36 (36,859)	\$49,540,691	\$287.09
University of California	8	77,528	2587	21.75 (16,862)	\$19,334,533	\$249.38
Private Universities	60	75,573	3506	28.01 (21,168)	\$23,642,049	\$312.83
Business Colleges	41	19,013	2751	56.95 (10,828)	\$10,360,386	\$527.86

Further evidence of community college failure to provide financial aid in proportion to the number of students enrolled is indicated by figures from the San Francisco Regional Office of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which show fund requests for the 1971-72 year for the N.D.S.L., E.O.G., and C.W.S. Program.

Although these figures are based on California schools, evidence indicates they are not atypical for other community colleges in the United States. The tragedy lies in the fact that although community college enrollment is two-thirds of the total enrollment of all public and private institutions of higher education in the state of California and is 85 per cent of all entering freshmen, the request for aid funds represents only 22 per cent of total requested by all institutions of higher education in the state. We know that a major reason for attending community colleges is financial, yet community colleges aid only 10 per cent of their students compared with 22 percent and higher at the four-year institutions.

The community college aid picture may be summarized as follows: small aid programs, low commitment to student aid, poorly trained financial aid personnel and poorly staffed financial aid offices. Is the scene changing? What can the aid profession do to help? What can the budding community college aid officer do to help himself?

Evidence of awakening is shown in several areas. Although the request for funds for 1971-72 in California was only 22 per cent of the total funds sought, the \$29 million obtained is approximately three times the amount funded to community colleges in California for 1970-71. Increasing numbers of community colleges are advertising for financial aid officers. Aid officers presently working in community colleges in California have bonded together to form a statewide professional organization. The California Community College Student Aid Officers Association is actively pursuing inservice training and is becoming a pressure group regarding legislation, funding and community college representation in aid matters.

Another encouraging sign is evidenced in the Higher Education Survey. Community college officers recognized the need for academic training, for job orientation and for inservice training. Their judgment of the kinds of courses and types of training are comparable to more experienced four-year college personnel (5, pp. 23-29).

Encouraging evidence of increased commitment both from the community college administration and the individual aid officers is surfacing.

A challenge is certainly placed on the total aid profession to assist in development of the community college financial aid program. Important next steps as seen by this writer include:

1. Developing recognized standards for financial aid officers and for the operations of financial aid offices.
2. Broadening the guidelines for accreditation of colleges to include the area of financial aid.

3. Establishing a research program in the Student Financial Aid Field.
4. Developing a core of academic courses and establishing training manuals for prospective aid officers.
5. Developing and maintaining inservice programs for both experienced and inexperienced aid officers.
6. Developing minimum standards for aid office operations by the aid profession, in cooperation with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. This writer believes that funds should not be allocated until those minimum standards are met.

For the struggling new community college aid officer there are some avenues to self inservice training available now. One can become knowledgeable by:

1. Reading materials presently in print, along with the weekly aid publications.
2. Contacting all the available consultants for assistance.
3. Visiting colleges with established financial aid programs.
4. Attending meetings of professional groups, local and regional meetings sponsored by the H.E.W., the College Entrance Examination Board, The American College Testing Program, and four-year college workshops or institutes.
5. Listening to anyone and everyone who had had experience in the field.

In summary, community colleges appear to have become a permanent and vital segment of the American education scene. The generally accepted objectives of these institutions include providing lower division education, vocational and technical training, and community services. More important is the opportunity provided by the community college for furthering the realization of the democratic ideal that post-secondary education should be at least available to all who so desire. Providing equal opportunity requires more than just an open door. Inside the door must be the services needed to assist the financially handicapped as well as the educationally handicapped.

The entire financial aid profession is in the early stages of development but the community college group is in its infancy and needs support from the more experienced and knowledgeable four-year college aid community.

The professionalization of aid officers in the two-year colleges is mandatory if the best interests of our potential students and our nation are to be served.

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